left-wing journalists who did not identify themselves with the Bolsheviks but leaned strongly toward them. The majority of the Soviet, while applauding their oratory, did not share their radicalism. Chkheidze was probably the best exponent of the more moderate views, but he was a poor speaker and, as the chairman of the organization, he was reluctant to express himself on controversial issues and to enforce any particular policy. Tseretelli, who was politically very close to him but could formulate and defend his views with greater vigor, became the leader of the majority in the Soviet. His strength was not only in his exceptional oratorical ability—he was the best speaker in the Russian revolution in 1917—but also in clear and forceful political thinking and personal integrity that commanded respect even from his political enemies. But he was more a bard of the revolution than an organizer of victory and, like most Russian intellectuals, he was better in defending the principles he cherished than in fitting them to the cruel realities of life.

Under the influence of Tseretelli, a realignment began in the Soviet and the Executive Committee. The cleavage between the right and left wings became deeper and clearer. At the beginning, the right wing seemed firmly united while the left wing had no leadership and no unity of purpose. The situation changed a month later, after the arrival of Lenin.

CONFLICT OF POWERS

Russia was in poor shape when Tsarism collapsed. A sizable part of its territory was occupied by the Germans; the army was disorganized; the people were yearning for peace; peasants were demanding immediate redistribution of land; economic life was out of balance. To solve these and other problems, the country needed a strong government that inspired the people's confidence. Unfortunately, the Provisional Government could not meet this requirement. The masses of the people had confidence only in the Soviets and committees they had elected. Each city and each village had its own Soviet. In contrast to the organizations thus named under the Communist dictatorship later, these were freely elected councils close to the people. In the absence of other public authorities, some provincial Soviets acted as local governments, issuing regulations, appointing police officers, and so forth. Even when they did not share in such functions, the Soviets had tremendous moral and political power.

On the other hand, the Provisional Government was too closely associated with the Tsarist Duma and the old regime to command the people's respect. Workers, soldiers, and peasants simply could